

**Skills™ The Online Autism Solution**

Dashboard for Johnny

**Client Demographic**

Name	Johnny
Birth Date	N/A (8 yrs.)
Gender	N/A
Nickname	N/A
Caregiver	N/A
Relationship	N/A
Caregiver Phone	N/A

**Progress**

Assessment overview is available only in the paid version of Skills.

Curriculum	Assessed	Yes	No	Unanswered	Total
Social	70.96%	45	190	63	217
Motor	2.9%	0	4	156	160
Language	55.57%	98	180	218	231
Adaptive	58.54%	10	1	10	169
Play	76.29%	38	1	43	198
Executive Functions	64.57%	49	62	61	172
Cognition	23.74%	11	53	206	269
Academic	43.36%	71	76	92	304

**Examples**

- SD: The therapist and the child use the spoon to feed the R. The child uses a spoon to feed the R.
- SD: The therapist and the child use the spoon to feed the R. The child uses a spoon to feed the R.

## SKILLS™: The Online Autism Solution

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### Category

Curriculum for Autism Treatment

### BOTTOM LINE

Get this program if you want a comprehensive curriculum, can understand behavioral jargon, and want to allocate more of your time on therapy and less time typing out programs. This tool will allow you to focus your time and resources on teaching skills that matter without having to worry that you are missing steps in a sequence or teaching things sooner than you should. It received 4/5 stars only because of the learning curve required to navigate it and its incomplete feel at times (missing videos, etc.)

## The SKILLS curriculum is a web-based curriculum of (4k) targets for designing and managing applied behavior analysis-based treatment programs for children with autism and related disorders.

### *Experience*

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The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) provided me with a trial login for the SKILLS account, and I dove in immediately! The promise of almost 4000 skills (3372 by my count) available at my fingertips was enticing. After logging in, I was prompted to create a profile for the child for whom I would be programming (Little Johnny). In less than 5 minutes, I had Little Johnny in the system and ready for treatment. Once entered, I clicked his name and was taken to his dashboard.

The dashboard feature promises an overview of Little Johnny's progress through assessment, treatment, and mastery of skills at the click of a tab. At the top of this page, steps are numbered and displayed: (1) choose child, (2) start assessment, (3) choose activity, and (4) start treatment. There's a small button at the bottom right of this page that prompts a click when ready to continue (to Step 2: assessment).

The assessment step begins with a screener, which the SKILLS system uses my answers from 11 questions (e.g., Can your child stand without assistance?; Does your child answer questions in full sentences?) to select and present a list of curricular assessments. I dutifully answered the questions about a fictional Little Johnny and was taken to a dizzying list of assessments. Happily, before I begin each, I was provided with the number of questions involved allowing me to select an assessment that I currently had time to complete (Joint Attention, for instance has 14 questions while Basic Social Skills only has 2).

Since I had plenty of time, I selected Joint Attention and began diligently selecting yes/no/probe to each of the 14 questions. The probe option basically suspends the answer until you can actually probe the skill. I imagine this feature will reduce inaccurate assessments due to people guessing on items that they are not sure about.

After reporting Little Johnny's joint attention skills, I clicked continue and was taken to a page to choose activities (Step 3). On this page, Little Johnny's deficits were presented as sections under which specific activities were described and listed in order of difficulty. Adding them to Johnny's treatment program was as simple as ticking a digital checkmark. In case there was confusion about an activity, I had the option of watching a treatment video and looking at activity summary sheets comprising material setup, Discriminative Stimuli (SDs), responses, examples, and a list of prerequisites (it is important to note that these summary sheets use technical language such as SD instead of instruction). This would probably prove difficult for someone with no training in behavior analysis. It does use lay-friendly language, however, for the sample Individual Education Plan IEP goals and benchmarks. I imagine each of these would be handy to print out and place in Little Johnny's program binder, if he were real.

After selecting Little Johnny's activities to learn, I continued on to Step 4, Start Treatment. On this page, all of the activities I had just selected show up and detailed SDs and responses are provided. The next step here is not so clear. After a little exploration (and another treatment video), I "opened" the first activity and am taken to the guide page for that activity. There are tabs for details, teaching steps, exemplars, and handouts and status. This is a more detailed version of the summary sheet which includes editable teaching tips and customizable prompt levels. From here I was able to view the programmed teaching steps (this activity, "responding to joint attention bids" does not have any preselected steps) or create custom ones (in case Little Johnny needs smaller steps in his programming). The status tab included the date it was added into the current program. While the options are interesting, I was ready to begin treatment, and found myself frustrated because I did not know what to do to next to actually start teaching.

By now, I am used to clicking the continue button, a feature which normally resides at the bottom right of each page and is conspicuously missing now. At this point, I began clicking various hyperlinks and pictures in a digital extinction burst. Happily, it paid off, and I clicked the correct link, which opened a dialogue box allowing me to introduce the activity that marks this date as the introduction of that skill. I can then print off the activity brief and go find Little Johnny, it is teaching time!

Presumably, after some exemplary ABA-based therapy, Little Johnny would begin mastering tasks, and I would trek back through the steps again, except this time, after choosing Johnny (Step 1), I would move directly to the start teaching (Step 4). This may lead to some confusion at first, because I already did the teaching; but this is the place in SKILLS that I enter how my teaching impacted Johnny's skill set, selecting either "known" or "generalized" for each skill mastered. Once Johnny has mastered the requisite number of teaching steps and exemplars, it is time to choose another activity (Step 3). The order here seems a little counter-intuitive, but once experienced, it becomes fairly straightforward.

Finally, after entering this data, I now have access to a variety of charts and reports that summarize the progress of his treatment, curriculum lesson details, clinical timelines, and even a chart that organizes skills based on Skinner's verbal operants. Overall, this seems to be

a powerful curriculum that has impressive breadth and provides organizational tools to provide the clinician the tools needed to maintain maximum efficiency in teaching and managing their caseload.

### Aversive

Currently the SKILLS™ curriculum appears to be a work in progress. From webinars I have attended and material on the website, it appears that SKILLS™ is best conceptualized as a living document such that as the CARD team enhances and refines their behavioral programming, the curriculum will likely be updated. Additionally, this is made salient when it is noted that some of the activities do not yet have videos. While it is a downside now, the fact that it is evolving can easily be seen as a positive feature (especially to those focusing on the future). Currently there is no ability to enter/track individual data for programs. SKILLS only collects data on introduction and mastery of targets. There are hints that this may be a future feature.

My biggest gripe was that I wanted to do the entire assessment battery at once. Once I completed an assessment, the button that said "submit and continue" took me to Step 3 where I chose targets to train. There was a button below that said "submit and go back to assessment." Because the dashboard categorized the steps numerically, it appears that the user should progress through each step in that order and will be finished at

**Skills™ The Online Autism Solution**

LEAVE A MESSAGE

BUY NOW

1 Choose Child 2 Start Assessment 3 Choose Activity 4 Start Treatment

Johnny

**Dashboard**

**Client Demographic** Edit

Name	Johnny
Birth Date	N/A (8 yrs.)
Gender	N/A
Nickname	N/A
Caregiver	N/A
Relationship	N/A
Caregiver Phone	N/A

Progress Charts

Skills History

Behavior Intervention Plan Builder

My Subscription (Members only)

Provider Notes

Data Sheets

**Progress**

Assessment In Treatment Mastery

Assessment overview is available only in the paid version of Skills.

Curriculum	Assessed	Yes	No	Unassessed	Total
Social	70.9%	45	100	63	217
Motor	22%	0	4	156	160
Language	55.5%	96	160	235	491
Autism	58.5%	71	160	189	320
Play	76.2%	43	57	43	143
Executive Functions	64.2%	49	62	61	172
Cognition	22.7%	11	53	205	269
Academic	40.3%	71	76	92	339

Continue

**Skills™ The Online Autism Solution**

LEAVE A MESSAGE

BUY NOW

1 Choose Child 2 Start Assessment 3 Choose Activity 4 Start Treatment

Johnny

**Assessment Questions**

List All Skills by Lesson, Curriculum Search skill by keyword or topics

Assessment > Assessment Questions

Social Curriculum Lesson: Level 1: Nonvocal Imitation

EW	Questions and examples	Yes	No	Probe	Clear
1. 2509	Can your child imitate an action with an object when distracter objects are present (when instructed)? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
2. 3399	Can your child imitate an action with one or more objects when distracter objects are present (without any specific instruction)? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
3. 2510	Can your child imitate simple gross motor movements (no objects) when instructed? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
4. 3404	Can your child imitate simple gross motor movements (no objects) without being instructed? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
5. 2512	Can your child imitate fine motor movements when instructed? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
6. 3405	Can your child imitate fine motor movements without being instructed? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
7. 2511	Can your child imitate a chain of actions (gross and fine), step by step as they are being performed when instructed? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
8. 2513	Can your child imitate body postures? View example...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear

the conclusion of Step 4. However, once the first step is completed (select child), the remaining three (2: assessment, 3: activity choice, and 4: treatment) are meant to be accessed iteratively for each curricular segment. This is not apparent, and until I realized it, led to some frustration in navigating the site. This is likely to lead to a longer learning curve, but once understood, it is unlikely to interfere with usability. The user manual would have helped (in fact –did help – when I finally referred to it, after the fact), but the 65 pages were daunting. As a savvy computer technologist, I assumed I would be able to make it work without resorting to a manual. There are also video tutorials to guide the user through this process on the support center site.

## Appetitive

The curricular organization is one of its strengths. SKILLS™ has eight curricular areas: Social, Motor, Language, Adaptive, Play, Executive Functions, Cognition, and Academic. Each curriculum comprises a number of different domains consisting of lessons that house the skills. Each skill is categorized as either a building block, fundamental skill, or expansion skill. The skills are age-referenced and the curricular system is designed to prompt for checks on skills as the child ages.

The SKILLS™ website design is pleasant and straightforward. While there were a few times I was left scratching my head and attempting to figure out

what/where to click next, the design was in general user friendly and intuitive. Once I had gained experience with it (after adding/assessing the fourth fictional child), I was able to move through the assessment/treatment process readily.

SKILLS™ is an excellent tool for a team looking for a comprehensive curriculum for children with autism (I've yet to see one with more breadth and scope) that was created to be used in an ABA-based treatment program by experts in the field. Additionally, it provides some standardization that should appeal to researchers interested in effects on learning on a large scale.

## Neutral

This program is handy if the user has something in mind that they want to assess/treat (i.e., to see how his social skills with peers are doing) that fits within the curricular domain. If, however, the desire is a broad overview of \*all\* the assessments and skills that have been assessed or trained, the user is out of luck. This feature (a button that would list everything on one screen) would benefit the usability of the site. However, the fact that the curriculum forces the user to focus on both scope and sequence may be intentional by the designers to minimize the likelihood that splinter skills are less likely to form. The use of technically precise language is a strength if the user is a behavior analyst. As such, this curriculum seems best used by a professional

The screenshot shows the 'Choose Activities' interface for a child named Johnny. The top navigation bar includes 'LEAVE A MESSAGE', 'Skills™ The Online Autism Solution', and a 'Free Version' button. Below the navigation bar, there are four steps: 1. Choose Child, 2. Start Assessment, 3. Choose Activity, and 4. Start Treatment. The 'Choose Activity' step is currently selected. The main content area shows a list of activities under the 'Social' curriculum. The activities are categorized into three sections: 'Imitation Of Actions With Objects', 'Gross Motor Imitation', and 'Fine Motor Imitation'. Each activity has a description, a status (e.g., 'Not Started'), and a 'Show Lesson Purpose' button.

The screenshot shows the 'Current Program' interface for a child named Johnny. The top navigation bar is identical to the previous screenshot. Below the navigation bar, there are four steps: 1. Choose Child, 2. Start Assessment, 3. Choose Activity, and 4. Start Treatment. The 'Start Treatment' step is currently selected. The main content area shows a list of activities under the 'Current Program' curriculum. The activities are categorized into three sections: 'Nonvocal Imitation', 'Gross Motor Imitation', and 'Fine Motor Imitation'. Each activity has a description, a status (e.g., 'Not Started'), and a 'Show Lesson Purpose' button.



rather than picked up by a member of the lay population. For behavior analysts who balk at online curriculums, worrying that they will be replaced by them, the use of technical jargon should be comforting as it encourages parents to consult with a professional rather than replace them.

## Cost

The price point of this curriculum can be a great thing for some while others may find it a little beyond the reach of their budget. For the professional, the cost is \$50/month per child. However, when I attempted to purchase, the only options I noticed were for five or ten children. It is unclear whether I have to pay \$250/month for five children even if I only have one or two, or whether there is a method to only pay per child's profile used.

For a parent, the cost is \$75/month per child and \$25/month extra for a second. Parents purchase these profiles one or two at a time.

## Bonus Features

I explored, but did not include in the review several features of SKILLS™ curriculum. Their exclusion was a function of their value compared to the curriculum proper.

There is a behavior support plan feature to develop function-based interventions for decelerative targets.

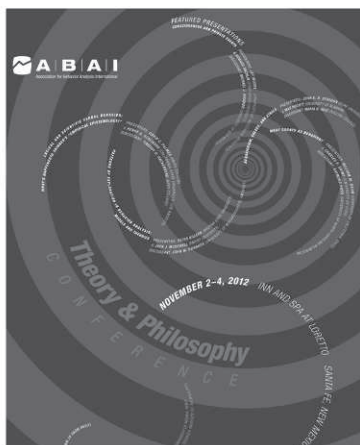
Weekly tracking for treatment hours that will make billing easier.

This wasn't made clear when I was first examining/trying SKILLS™, but an account comes with a free subscription to [www.cardelearning.com](http://www.cardelearning.com).

The screenshot shows the 'Details' tab of the SKILLS™ curriculum. It includes sections for 'Average Age Of Skills' (0-12 mos. and 1-2 yrs.), 'IEP Benchmark' (By (date), (name) will imitate an action using one or more objects without instruction, across (settings) and (people) with 100% accuracy in (if out of #) opportunities, as measured by (person responsible and data collection method).), 'Activity' (SD 3: The therapist presents a field of objects and performs an action with one or more of the objects (no vocal stimulus is presented). R 3: The child imitates the action with the correct object(s).), 'Examples' (SD: The therapist and the child each have a baby and there is a bowl with two spoons. The therapist uses the spoon to feed the baby. R: The child uses a spoon and pretends to feed the baby. SD: The therapist and the child are playing with musical instruments. There are two drums, drum sticks, maracas, a harmonica and a recorder. The therapist picks up a maraca and shakes it. R: The child picks up the other maraca and shakes it.), and 'Teaching Options' (1. When teaching nonvocal imitation with objects: Have one object with which you model the action. The object would then be handed to the child so that he / she is able to imitate your action (see first example above). An alternative option is for you and the child to each have your own identical or similar object (see the second and

The screenshot shows the 'Exemplars' tab of the SKILLS™ curriculum. It displays a table of fine motor actions with their status and a 'Filter By' dropdown set to 'Show All'. The table includes actions like 'Touch nose', 'Touch ears', 'Touch eyes', 'Touch mouth', 'Touch tongue', 'Touch elbow', 'Touch teeth', 'Point / Point to (object)', 'Pick up small beads', 'Thumbs up', 'Roll clay', 'Make a diamond with fingers (from Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)', 'Wiggle fingers', 'OK sign', 'Touch thumb to pinky', 'Interlock fingers', 'Squeeze clothespin', 'Squeeze clay', and 'Peace sign'.

Action	Status	Action
Touch nose	Mastered	
Touch ears	Mastered	
Touch eyes	Generalized	
Touch mouth	Mastered	
Touch tongue	Introduced	
Touch elbow	Known	
Touch teeth	Mastered	
Point / Point to (object)	Mastered	
Pick up small beads	Lost	
Thumbs up	Mastered	
Roll clay	Introduced	
Make a diamond with fingers (from Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)	Introduced	
Wiggle fingers		
OK sign		
Touch thumb to pinky		
Interlock fingers		
Squeeze clothespin		
Squeeze clay		
Peace sign		



The ABAI Learning Center offers online access to popular sessions from ABAI events; it allows you to listen to and view presentations and includes opportunities to earn continuing education credit for behavior analysts from selected sessions.

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